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LETTER DATED 11 OCTOBER 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ETHIOPIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit herewith a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia on 11 October 1999 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Duri MOHAMMED
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia
on 11 October 1999

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is dismayed by the continued posturing of the Eritrean regime as the "champion of peace", while continuing to occupy Ethiopian territory. Eritrea's noise for "peace" is only a veneer intended to obscure its underlying true character of aggression and warmongering.

It should be clear to all that it is Eritrea which is being required to withdraw its troops from areas forcibly occupied since 6 May 1998. That fact is at the centre of the crisis that has been imposed on Ethiopia. Unless Eritrea "removes the gun it has put at the head of Ethiopia", withdraws from all Ethiopian territories that it has occupied by force, and stops training, arming and supporting terrorists and warlords, and puts an end to its acts aimed at destabilizing the Horn of Africa, it is obvious that durable peace will not be achieved.

Unfortunately the statements and acts of Eritrea's leaders do not give rise to confidence in their readiness to reach a peaceful settlement. On 4 October 1999, the Eritrean Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the first time named the occupied town of Zalanbessa as sovereign Eritrean territory. That Eritrea could make such a ludicrous claim only underlines how important it is for Ethiopia to ensure that iron-clad guarantees are in place before embarking on any journey of peace with Eritrea.

If in the ongoing Organization of African Unity (OAU) process to achieve a peaceful solution Ethiopia is guaranteed the return of all its territories and a full and unequivocal return to the status quo ante as is required by international law, Ethiopia would be ready, as ever, to fulfil its obligations on the basis of the OAU peace proposals including, among other things, engaging in the process that includes delimitation and demarcation of the border and to avail itself of the necessary arbitration if required. If Eritrean aggression is peacefully reversed there is no reason why Ethiopia would resort to taking defensive measures that would entail the loss of lives and the destruction of property. That is not the choice of Ethiopia.

Ethiopia has legitimate concerns that need to be met. As it is a victim of aggression, meeting Ethiopia's legitimate concerns is the least that can be done. It is important that the OAU peace process not get bogged down because loopholes on the issue of full and unequivocal return to the status quo ante are available for Eritrea to exploit. Ethiopia is therefore continuing its dialogue with OAU in the hope of ensuring that a durable peace is achieved in the shortest possible time. No amount of posturing and political grandstanding by Eritrea will deter Ethiopia from its path. A wiser and more practical choice for Eritrea would be to avoid histrionics and to clearly identify the areas which it is obliged to vacate as per the provisions of the peace proposal on the table.